



Bureau of Land Management White River Field Office West Douglas Herd Area Planning Bulletin #3

September 22, 2003

New Schedule for the West Douglas Herd Area Planning Process

The BLM White River Field Office has recently developed a new schedule (see diagram) for the West Douglas Herd Area Amendment Planning Process. Last June (2003) we sent out a letter to notify everyone that we were extending our original schedule for this project to allow the Northwest Resource Advisory Council (NWRAC) time to review the issues, and because of the demand on the White River Field Office Staff resulting from the recent resource-area-wide increase in oil and gas development. The NWRAC has organized a subcommittee that will provide advice to the BLM during the planning process. And, as winter approaches, the rate of oil and gas development activity appears to be slowing enough to allow the White River staff to direct the quality of emphasis needed to move forward with West Douglas Herd Area Amendment planning process.

As depicted in the schedule, the White River staff is currently picking up where we left off by conducting environmental analysis and preparing an environmental assessment (EA) of potential impacts from alternatives for the West Douglas Herd Area amendment. When we have finished this assessment, BLM will identify a preferred alternative and develop a Draft Plan Amendment.

Planning Process Schedule

Event	Completion Date
Complete Environmental Assessment (EA) Identify Preferred Alternative/Develop Draft Plan Amendment Prepare Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) Start 30-day public review	3/1/04
End 30-day public review	3/31/04
Develop Proposed Plan Amendment Publish Notice of Availability Start Governor's Consistency Review Start 30-day public protest period	5/7/04
End 30-day public protest period	6/7/04
Governor's Review Completed	7/7/04
Resolve Protests/Inconsistencies	7/7/04
Post Notice of Significant Change (if needed) Start 30-day comment period (if needed)	7/14/04
End 30-day comment period	8/13/04
Prepare Final Plan Amendment/Record of Decision (ROD) State Director Approves Amendment and Signs ROD	9/15/04

BLM will also use the assessment to determine if there are any significant impacts from the preferred alternative/Draft Plan Amendment. If BLM determines that there are significant impacts, we must either change the alternative/draft amendment to mitigate, reduce, or eliminate these significant impacts; or prepare an environmental impact statement. If we develop an environmental impact statement, the remainder of the schedule will no longer be valid, as there will be several other steps involved with the preparation of this type of document. If BLM determines that there are no significant impacts then we will document this in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). BLM will then make the preferred alternative/Draft Plan Amendment, environmental assessment, and FONSI available for public review as depicted on the schedule.

For more information
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Based on public comments received during the review period and advice from the NWRAC, BLM will make any necessary modifications to the preferred alternative/Draft Amendment to develop the Proposed Plan Amendment. A Notice of Availability (NOA) will then be published in the *Federal Register* announcing the availability of the Proposed Amendment, environmental assessment, and FONSI and announcing the beginning of a 30-day protest period. During the protest period, any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the amendment may protest the amendment to the Director of BLM in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulation (43 CFR 1610.5-2). Starting simultaneously with the publication of the NOA, the State Governor will review the amendment for consistency with state and local government plans and regulations.

If a protest or an inconsistency identified by the Governor's office results in a significant change to the

Proposed Amendment, then a Notice of Significant Change will be published in the Federal Register and another 30-day public comment period will commence. If no significant changes are made to the Proposed Amendment, then this step will be eliminated from the process.

After this 30-day public comment period for significant changes (if needed), BLM will consider all comments received and prepare the final Amendment to the White River Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (ROD) for approval by the BLM State Director. Once approved, BLM can begin implementation of the amended resource management plan.

Public involvement is a crucial part of this planning process and BLM encourages those with interests or concerns to become actively involved. ▢

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